

Patrina Riley  
Testimony  
February 9, 2016

Public education is a chaotic problem all throughout Michigan. It's a problem costing our children their future every day. Our children are failing in high numbers. Our children are falling through the cracks in front of us because we lack a strong system of schools. There is no stability. There is no togetherness.

Hi my name is Patrina Riley and I am here on behalf of my daughter, Kahlia who is 9 years-old and in the fourth grade at Mackenzie Elementary-Middle School. Kahlia is a creative, compassionate young girl who is always ready for a challenge and unfortunately does not get the academic rigor she needs. In order for me to effectively teach my child I must engage in every way as a parent to ensure there is consistency brought to her education.

I can't allow my daughter to fail in the school system like my son, Xavier who is now 25 years-old. Xavier was a funny high school student with an endless amount of potential. Because of an unexpected closing of schools, my son was forced to go to a school located much further from home. As a working, single mother, this made it harder for me to get him back and forth every day. A great education shouldn't be so far away.

Please take a look at the slide behind me presented by Mayor Duggan last Thursday. As depicted on the screen, the majority of our high schools are not aligned with our high school population. So if you live on the west side, as I and many families do, your choices are worse and worse. Why should I have to travel so far downtown, when quality education for my kid should be right up the street?

As schools close without notice, others become overcrowded making a school building an unsafe place for children to be. How could my son grow and learn in an environment where he didn't feel safe and secure every day? He dropped out. As his mother, I encouraged him to go back and he finally received his GED.

Today, his little sister Kahlia is an A student as well. As a parent, I feel the same pressure all over again. I'm concerned about literacy, safety, transportation, transparency and the overcrowding in our schools. There has to be an effective, systemic change, NOW. I want my daughter and all our children to feel safe and thrive in school, graduate on time and be

ready for college, so they can accomplish their dreams as active citizens and be positioned to win like every kid deserves.

In closing, I ask that you support the restructuring of Detroit Public Schools and the DPS debt relief for my daughter, Kahlia and for all our children. I also ask that you consider the need for 1 local entity that would coordinate the opening and closing of schools and hold all schools accountable to quality standards. With this structure in place, parents like myself wouldn't have to watch their son fall through the cracks, but would watch their son wake up and go to a quality, neighborhood school every morning.

Thank you.